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20 December 1985

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

THROUGH : Vice Chairman, National Intelligence Council *HDM*

FROM : Harry C. Cochran, Special Assistant for Warning

SUBJECT : Warning and Forecasting: Monthly Assessment

USSR: Post-Summit Intentions

1. Gorbachev's behavior at Geneva and subsequent Soviet evaluations of the summit reflect a long-term political strategy aimed primarily at altering the geopolitical balance in Europe. This strategy is not designed to facilitate a limited accommodation with the US that would contain threats inherent in SDI and modernization of US strategic forces, but rather to stimulate political forces in Western Europe that Moscow hopes will determine the outcome of crucial national elections in West Germany in January 1987 and, to a lesser extent, in the United Kingdom the following year. In Moscow's view, a Social Democratic victory or an SPD-Green Party coalition government would foreshadow the kind of geopolitical change that has long been a major Soviet objective.
2. In the months before Gorbachev's visit to the US, Soviet policy will be shaped by a sense of confidence that political-economic trends in both Western Europe and the US are working to the USSR's advantage. Soviet assessments probably exaggerate the impact of the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings Act on the President's bargaining position. The Soviets also believe that recent improvements in the atmospherics of Sino-Soviet relations will further buttress their position vis-a-vis the US in the next year or two. In sum, the Gorbachev leadership's perceptions of the two superpowers' assets and liabilities approaching the second summit meeting will instill considerable confidence and an offensive outlook in Moscow. They will not be operating under a sense of relative vulnerability or inferiority. Western assessments that "internal contradictions of the Soviet system" have obliged the Soviets to seek a "respite" (Henry Kissinger) exaggerate the consequences of domestic economic problems for foreign political strategy. Gorbachev's foreign policy is impelled by a sense of opportunity to secure major geopolitical gains, not by a need to retrench or retreat in dealing with the US and its major allies.
3. Soviet tactics in the next six months will continue to focus on the key issues of SDI and a moratorium on nuclear testing. Moscow will operate on the assumption that it will be free to manipulate ostensible arms control concessions because the Administration will not alter its present positions, particularly in regard to SDI. The Soviets are counting on considerable success in placing the US and West Germany on the defensive. Thus Gorbachev, in his 27 November speech to the Supreme Soviet, declared that "Time will show to what extent these leaders' words and deeds match. We will wait." The outlook for the next six to nine months, therefore, is for considerable restraint in Soviet foreign policy and avoidance of provocative initiatives that would compromise Gorbachev's stance as the champion of detente, arms control, and improved Soviet-US relations.

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4. This stance, however, will not dilute one of the crucial elements in Soviet political strategy, namely, demonstrating resolve to proceed with the modernization of strategic forces as a means of stimulating ever growing anxieties in Western public opinion about an uncontrolled arms race. This tactic will lead the Soviets to welcome US disclosures that they are preparing for initial flight testing of two new ICBMs at the same time that SS-25 and SS-24 ICBMs are being deployed. Moscow calculates that this prospect of relentlessly growing Soviet strategic power in the absence of arms control agreements will have much greater impact on Western opinion than US charges of an "expanding pattern" of Soviet violations of past agreements. Gorbachev, in fact, may believe that disclosures of new Soviet strategic weapons will intensify domestic pressures on the Administration to renounce further compliance with the terms of SALT II. The Soviets had expected such a decision last June, and they were surprised and frustrated by the President's decision to continue qualified compliance.

5. Soviet initiatives in the next six months will include:

—Keeping SDI at the forefront of international attention by repeatedly insisting that a ban on "space weapons" is an irreducible precondition for an accord to reduce strategic nuclear weapons. They will also promote the prospect of "compromise solutions" to divergent US and Soviet proposals for 50 percent reductions, provided the US agrees to abandon SDI. Soviet media will stress Gorbachev's offer to "open our laboratories for monitoring an accord" to ban the "militarization of space."

—The Soviets will give greater publicity to their proposal for a one year extension of the informal commitments to observe SALT II.

—They will continue the nuclear testing moratorium after it formally expires on 1 January 1986 at least until Gorbachev's visit to the US. Early next month, Moscow may make a low-keyed announcement that the Soviet Union is no longer bound by the unilateral moratorium because the US refused to follow suit. They probably will declare, however, that Soviet testing will not be resumed unless US tests or other actions require this step to protect the USSR's national security. Gorbachev will elaborate on his cryptic letter to the President offering to consider "certain measures of on-site verification" to enforce a testing moratorium.

—Moscow will make a highly publicized proposal to the US and Britain to resume negotiations on a comprehensive test ban treaty.

—There will be further proposals to draft an accord on the "non-proliferation of chemical weapons," for a zone in central Europe free from these weapons, and for a treaty banning chemical weapons and liquidating stockpiles.

—The Soviets will promote Gorbachev's ambiguous offer of a "separate" agreement on intermediate nuclear weapons and "direct dialogues" with France and Britain. These initiatives will be aimed at generating opposition to NATO nuclear policy in Western Europe, particularly West Germany. The Soviets will insist, however, that any "interim" accord on INF must be linked to agreements covering strategic forces, and they will continue to argue that Pershing IIs and GLCMs are "part of the strategic balance."

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6. As the date of Gorbachev's visit to the US approaches, the Soviets will intensify their insistence that the second summit must produce "specific and concrete results" on arms control and security. But behind this rhetoric will be a fundamental assumption that prospects for significant accords on sensitive arms control and political issues will be no greater in mid-1986 than they were in November 1985. Gorbachev told the Supreme Soviet on 27 November that "the US side so far has not proved to be ready for major decisions." Soviet commentators have alleged that the Administration "has yet to summon its resolve and political foresight to meet the constructive Soviet proposals half way." This formula is not only an accurate reflection of Soviet assessments but, more importantly, the keystone of their foreign political strategy in the next two years.

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